

STATE OF MICHIGAN
COURT OF APPEALS

In the Matter of ZEENAH ROSE BRADCOSKI,
Minor.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES,

Petitioner-Appellee,

v

KATHREEN BRADCOSKI,

Respondent-Appellant.

UNPUBLISHED

January 29, 2008

No. 280237

Kent Circuit Court

Family Division

LC No. 07-052397-NA

Before: Beckering, P.J., and Sawyer and Fort Hood, JJ.

PER CURIAM

Respondent appeals as of right from the trial court order terminating her parental rights to Zeenah Rose Bradcoski (d/o/b November 27, 2006) pursuant to MCL 712A.19b(3)(g), (j), (l), and (m). We affirm. This appeal has been decided without oral argument pursuant to MCR 7.214(E).

As her sole issue on appeal, respondent argues that termination of her parental rights was not in the best interests of Zeenah. We disagree.

To terminate parental rights, the trial court must find that at least one of the statutory grounds for termination set forth in MCL 712A.19b(3) has been met by clear and convincing evidence. *In re Sours*, 459 Mich 624, 632-633; 593 NW2d 520 (1999). Here, respondent does not challenge the trial court's finding that the statutory grounds for termination were proven by clear and convincing evidence. Once a statutory ground for termination is established, the trial court must terminate parental rights unless there exists clear evidence, on the whole record, that termination is not in the child's best interests. MCL 712A.19b(5); *In re Trejo*, 462 Mich 341, 353; 612 NW2d 407 (2000). The trial court's decision terminating parental rights is reviewed for clear error. MCR 3.977(J); *Trejo, supra* at 355-357; *Sours, supra* at 632-633.

The trial court did not clearly err in its best interests determination. Given respondent's long-term drug use, extensive criminal record for soliciting prostitution, larceny, and retail fraud, lengthy incarceration, mental illness, and prior involvement with Child Protective Services in regard to three other children to whom her parental rights were terminated, Zeenah would be at risk in respondent's care. By respondent's own admission, she lacks suitable housing, a high

school diploma, and job skills. By even the most optimistic estimates of case workers, it would take respondent at least six to nine months after release from prison to address her numerous parenting deficiencies and work toward reunification with Zeenah. And as the trial court noted, because respondent gave birth to Zeenah while incarcerated and because she was immediately placed in the care of her maternal grandparents, the child never developed an emotional bond with respondent.

Respondent's argument that she demonstrated commitment and sacrifice for Zeenah when she assumed the difficulties inherent in giving birth does not support a finding that termination was contrary to Zeenah's best interests. Commitment to suitable parenting requires more than experiencing childbirth and feeling love. A parent must demonstrate a commitment as well as an ability to safely parent. A parent must have an acceptable level of parenting skill. See *In re Dahms*, 187 Mich App 644, 647; 468 NW2d 315 (1991). Additionally, a parent must demonstrate parenting skills to the point where the child would no longer be at risk in the parent's custody. *In re Gazella*, 264 Mich App 668, 676; 692 NW2d 708 (2005). Respondent's placement of Zeenah with the child's maternal grandparents during her incarceration is an example of her poor parental judgment. The grandparents (the biological parents of respondent) had their parental rights to respondent terminated due to neglect and have their own current problems with mental illness and suitable housing. While in the grandparent's care, Zeenah suffered what appeared to be a burn on her thigh. Respondent potentially exposed Zeenah to risk of harm by placing the child with her maternal grandparents.

In sum, respondent needs to address and resolve a variety of problems, including drug abuse, homelessness, unemployment, mental illness, and criminality. To do so, respondent must be released from prison, participate in drug treatment, obtain a GED or job skills, seek mental health treatment, and obtain suitable housing. Since respondent has not overcome these issues, and is unlikely to overcome them in the foreseeable future, termination of her parental rights was not clearly contrary to Zeenah's best interests. MCL 712A.19b(5); *Trejo, supra* at 356-357.

Affirmed.

/s/ Jane E. Beckering
/s/ David H. Sawyer
/s/ Karen M. Fort Hood